

Essay

THE EVIL TWIN IS INSIDE US

Transit Pluto on the U.S. Ascendant

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The tiny cabal which has “hijacked” the U.S. government is about to attack Iraq, unleashing a firestorm that could chain react. Like millions of others, I go about my daily routine, feeding the cats, doing errands, writing, painting, pretending normalcy while shaking, sickened and haunted by nightmare visions.

I flail about, searching for a way to harness this inexpressible fear and rage and sorrow, the deep deep disappointment and despair that my great homeland America, 21st century civilization's one significant national “power,” has not used this moment of unparalleled opportunity to reach within itself for its own grace and wisdom.

Instead, on the front page of *The New York Times*, September 20, 2002, this headline: “Bush to Outline Doctrine of Striking Foes First.” the U.S. is about to officially announce that it “will never allow its military supremacy to be challenged the way it was during the Cold War.” “Our forces will be strong enough,” the document states, “to dissuade potential adversaries from pursuing a military buildup in hopes of surpassing, or equalling, the power of the United states.”

(The U.S. struts its imperial stuff as the “world's only superpower,” still assuming, *pace* 9/11, that its actions do not reap consequences! Duh! Europe, with centuries of blood-soaked misery seared into memory, has, for the past several years, ridiculed the U.S. as a “hypermower.”)

The wisdom concealed in power lies below the mesmerizing drama of current foreign adventuring. That wisdom, shimmering darkly, illumined from within, sighs in compassion as it awaits our noticing. Meanwhile, we grow more and more distracted and anxious, steeling our hearts to the carnage to come, as the drums of war pump adrenaline into our collective solar plexus.

What began as murmurous rumor is now blatantly obvious: the U.S. is the world's most dangerous rogue state. And now, as of September 20, 2002, the U.S. not only admits what it's up to, but twists logic and common sense to insolently and cynically “justify” its arrogant, and ultimately suicidal, stance.

The U.S. is 226 years old, young by the standards of older nations; before our shocked and still-surprised eyes, our own beloved country has transmogrified into an adolescent bully who, addicted to alcohol and drugs and stimulants and media and oil to run its big cars and trucks, heat its 10,000-square-foot mansions, rides roughshod over the global neighborhood.

Our neighbors, watching this behavior and attitude, know that sooner or later this big strapping *stupid* boy will trip up and his tantrums cause mass havoc, a horrific accident; or, just as likely, his obsessive desire to get what he wants will take everyone else down with him. This adolescent is Lucifer, playing God. Hell awaits him.

Most of his neighbors are realistic. They have learned their place in the world, relative to others. They have “wised up” having discerned from long hard experience that the only way to successfully get this done is to act in concert with others, accepting and honoring everyone's gifts, needs, and blind spots.

As an American privileged enough to enjoy an extended period of adolescence myself, my own youthful rebellion was delayed, not revving to warp speed until my first Saturn

Return at 29. All during my 30s I “acted out,” experimenting. Cause initiated effect: over and over again, I found myself surprised, shocked, shamed; and if that didn't work, then slammed, hard, by the world's reaction to the tenacious stubbornness of my selfish desires.

In my 40s, I finally started to recognize my “unintegrated ego:” it dawned on me that all my life I had felt either totally superior or totally inferior to others, careening from pedestal to pit with alarming regularity. And, I began to realize that one calls for the other, and that, in fact, the more superior my conscious posturing, the more I was secretly cringing inside.

And vice versa: when I felt inferior, I really felt special, unique, different from others — superior!

That's when I started to work on myself, recognizing that whatever my conscious attitude, there was an unconscious attitude which perfectly mirrored it. My own “evil twin.”

(Thus, remembering how a former husband had accused me of having an affair, I realized later that *he* was having an affair — “projecting,” onto me, his own adultery.)

Likewise, we can say that every time the U.S., with harsh, obstinate, “resolute” (Bush's favorite word) rigidity, its smug, myopic “moral clarity” now crystallized into official U.S. doctrine, accuses a person, place or situation of being “evil,” it is actually pointing to something inside itself which doesn't feel good, which, in fact, feels bad, is even “evil.”

Such armoring is, of course, necessary for any self-aware entity which seeks to fulfill its own desires at the expense of others. Unconscious and unconscionable selfishness generates guilt: guilt for blatant and obvious abandonment of good will; guilt which the U.S. refuses to recognize, as to do so would be to throw its entire way of life into question and force it to consider giving up its dependence on others to feed its addictions. (Note: Americans, no longer citizens, are “consumers.”)

In order to defend (deny) its own guilty conscience, the U.S. torques its intelligence to see “evil” outside, and blames others for its own lack of integrity.

The U.S., unconsciously concealing its guilty conscience for “harboring weapons of mass destruction,” zealously guards its prerogative to them; it condemns others who have or want them as crazy and criminal and adds them to its nuclear hit list.

Which was the only nation to ever drop a nuclear bomb on a military or civilian population? Which one stockpiles thousands upon thousands of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons even now, self-righteously condemning others as rogue states that threaten world peace?

It is time to revisit the U.S. Chart. Hopefully, by looking at current transits to the original nature of this country as shown in relevant energy configurations of its birth chart, we can better prepare ourselves for what is happening and what is to come.

The single most important fact to absorb here is that transit Pluto still hovers around the U.S. Ascendant. The Ascendant signifies the persona or personality. Pluto, the planet of power, architect of death and destruction, is destroying our old way of life, our old image of ourselves, our old relations with others. Pluto is also the planet of rebirth and resurrection. First one, then the other; birth, then death, then birth again. Pluto is the life force, shaping itself into forms which emerge, briefly shine, and then disappear to re-emerge in some new form.

Or, I should say here, first one, then, possibly, the other. Resurrection depends on the manner of death. If destruction is total, and the life force itself snuffed out, so that nothing can live (nothing can grow on a charred and blackened planet) — then, in that case, death. Just death. No resurrection.

We are, quite possibly, at that point of no return. And that we are here now is no accident. Pluto's process brought it to the sunrise position on the U.S. Chart in August 2001, only one month prior to the 9/11 event which started the Cheney/Rumsfeld juggernaut on its hell-bent course, and this acting out, though inevitable, is one which can and must be transformed.

As Pluto is the power of resurrection, so does Pluto symbolize the power of transformation. Any situation can be altered. Nothing is “written in the stars” so deeply that it cannot alchemize into a more conscious expression of its original nature.

As deep into the bowels of ignominy as Pluto takes us, it can turn and lift us to the heavens. Its sign, Scorpio, is the only one with many symbols, ascending from the lowly scorpion to the lordly eagle — symbol for the United States of America — to the mythical, mystical phoenix which rises from its own ashes, and finally, to the dove of peace. This symbolic multiplicity bespeaks the scorpionic capacity for inner evolutionary change.

The Plutonian power of transformation is ours. If the world is to evolve into the dove of peace it must shift from the proliferating violence and destruction caused by the western world's growing addiction to oil and greed. The responsibility for this shift sits directly upon the shoulders of conscious U.S. citizens. Are not even the most aware among us addicted to material excess of some kind? Have we not personally been among the chief beneficiaries of the 25% of the world's energy mainlined directly into our veins?

To whom much is given, much is required. We are the chosen ones. If not us, then whom? If not now, then when?

The U.S. Chart (Dane Rudhyar version: July 4, 1776, 5:15 PM LMT, Philadelphia, PA) has a 13° Sagittarius Ascendant. Sagittarius, sign of philosophy and religion, of vast perspectives and, when skewed, of dogmatism, bombast and braggadocio — an apt descriptor of how the world has long viewed “the Ugly American” who travels abroad. Directly across from the Ascendant lie both Uranus, planet of sudden, lightning-like changes, and Mars, planet of courage and war, at 8° and 21° Gemini respectively. Their midpoint on the Descendant directly opposes the 13° Ascendant. It is precisely this technologically brilliant and inventive, self-righteous, and at times belligerent and trigger-happy U.S. posture which we need to focus on here.

We focus here because transit Pluto is now at 15° Sagittarius, very near the U.S. ascendant, where it has hovered since the very month before the signal event when everything changed and the current administration seized the 9/11 tragedy as an excuse to unleash its paranoid nightmare upon the world.

But before we delve further into the planetary correlations for the hellish horror into which we are now, apparently, heading, let us speak of the good in America. Let us remind ourselves of the inner nature of the U.S.: Cancer. Sun in Cancer, plus four other planets there: Jupiter, Venus, Mars and Mercury. A seriously nurturing, caring, family- and home-loving, though sometimes clannish, sentimental and ultra-sensitive nation, which, like the crab, is so tender and vulnerable that it must create a shell to ward off attack. We long used the oceans as our shell, and being by nature generous and open-hearted, opened our borders to all colors and races, all classes and religions.

The attacks on 9/11, striking the financial, political and cultural heart of the U.S. homeland, delivered a stunning blow to the solar plexus. All our survival instincts were aroused. We went into attack mode.

Bush and Co. used this event to arouse passion to a fury, to stir up fear and loathing, to shape us into a docile, sheep-like mass that would “follow the leader” no matter where he led. The stage was set for Armageddon, orchestrated by our C.E.O.-heavy White House, where Bush (also a Cancer sun sign, born with this Sun on the same degree as the U.S. Sun!) plays the role of the archetypal father who will do anything to save his family from danger.

The Svengalis who pull Bush's strings can count on this aspect of his character, and they can also count on the unconscious power of his first house Mercury/Pluto conjunction in Leo to keep him on focus. Once he makes a decision, he “never second-guesses,” lest he be accused of wimpish waffling.

The architects of this cynical and malevolent scenario, Cheney, Rumsfeld, and their minions, know exactly how to play both Bush and the American people. All they need do is put Bush on stage to arouse the public for a blood bath (and, not incidentally, to forget about the corporate/accounting/financial meltdown and other domestic issues; plus, of course, unify the country and neutralize Democrats in an election year).

As we can all sense, this is a defining moment in U.S. history, indeed, perhaps in the history of the world. This feels new. It feels like we've never been here before. And it's true, we haven't. Pluto was in the “2nd house” of the natal U.S. chart. The 2nd house

signifies the entity's self-worth, its values. Pluto's position there, in Capricorn, signifies that big business has always been the business of America. That this nation's values are those of corporate interests. Pluto's original position also included a near-exact opposition to the 8th house U.S. Mercury, in Cancer. Eighth house is the house of secrets, Scorpio's (and Pluto's) natural house, and it may indeed be that certain blood-lines, the Bushes among them, control this nation for their own corporate and familial self-interest.

Pluto's cycle is 248 years, moving only 1 or 2 degrees per year. Pluto crawls along so slowly that its changes are epochal, defining eras as they ebb and flow, seeping through the collective unconscious mind. In all 226 years since this country was born, Pluto has not even moved around the entire chart once! Assuming we don't blow up the world first, that first Pluto return in 2022-23 will be another defining time for this nation: perhaps then we will fully have learned from our experience enough to access the wisdom governing the uses and abuses of power.

Moving counterclockwise from its 2nd house position, Pluto moved around the chart to now press on the Ascendant for the first time in U.S. history. Interestingly enough, exactly as Pluto hit the U.S. Ascendant in August 2001, so did transit Saturn hit the U.S. Descendant, directly across from Pluto (for the first of three hits over the next nine months).

Saturn has a 30-year cycle, and its opposition to Pluto is relatively rare; that it would do so exactly as Pluto was also on the Ascendant — always the most sensitive point in the chart — is a synchronous event I am tempted to assign to divine design. The U.S. penchant for secret and manipulative corporate and economic power, all signified by Pluto's original position at the U.S. birth moment, was up for full disclosure, for coming into the open. Karma came due.

9/11 hit. The Justice Department took this opportunity to institute draconian measures, instilling fear, installing spies, and clamping down on civilians and civil rights, all in the interests of security” for its endless “War on Terror.” Three months later, the Enron

scandal spearheaded the first of many disclosures to reveal the corporate and banking world as a massive Ponzi scheme where the big boys' elitist club stifles the little people.

This ongoing deconstruction of our former adoration of CEO wealth and culture, which, incidentally, implicates Cheney as Halliburton CEO, then, of course, had to be pushed off the front pages by something even bigger. And what is bigger than Mideast war? Voila! Saddam Hussein, who has suddenly and conveniently displaced Osama bin Laden as the world's devil, and who the U.S. will now eliminate without anyone's help or sanction.

Pluto's power is being used in the usual "power over" way, and its extremes are being activated with exaggerated talk about Iraq's being about to blow up the world.

In the 1960s Starhawk popularized the idea of there being two kinds of power, "power over" and "power from within;" these contrast the drive to dominate others with the drive to center the self. In contrast to self-centeredness, centering the self is not selfish, but aware of others; not ego-oriented, but integrated. If one is centered within, there is no need to dominate. Instead, one is in touch with one's own specific history, gifts, and needs; one recognizes one's place. The more in touch we are with our own origins, the more we recognize ourselves as original, singular, unique. No longer empty (and needing others to fill us), we are filled to the brim from within. Rather than casting about for something external to give us meaning, we move from within to express the natural evolution of our own conscious and unconscious process.

The upshot of all this is that it appears to me that the most pressing need of the U.S. is that it learn to touch down into its own history. This is the first step towards recognizing the specific gifts which arise from its own original nature, and thus, of transforming its singular and unprecedented Plutonian power for good or evil.

One the U.S. truly empowers itself, it will naturally lead others rather than eliminate them in word and deed; it will inspire rather than intimidate; it will celebrate and acknowledge all peoples, both within and without its borders as it unleashes a flood of creativity which shifts the world into a sustainable future with abundance for all.

But this process of encountering and consciously integrating one's own origins is a difficult undertaking. It requires the kind of courage that makes chest-beating war-mongering look like child's play. And the very first step is the very hardest. Like the hero who must confront the dragon, to get in touch with our own national history is to confront the dragon of our founding guilt over both Native American genocide and Negro slavery. And it is to recognize this nation's part in all adventures which have used other nations and peoples as fodder.

In order to address our real history, we need to back up from the present, returning to Vietnam, then to Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and so on, digging down into memory. Rather than focusing on the Holocaust (others' guilt) we need to point our collective finger directly — eyes open wide with horror, hearts full of sorrow and remorse, souls asking for forgiveness — at our own.

Nelson Mandela sat in jail for 30 years for his opposition to his government's apartheid. That power-over South African state rendered him apparently powerless. Sometime in that 30-year incarceration Nelson Mandela penetrated to the wisdom buried in the heart of oppression. He recognized the Plutonian riches at the bottom of the well. (The word “Pluto,” means wealth; as is “plutocracy” government by the wealthy). For when he emerged from his own hell Nelson Mandela was an Elder. He knew exactly what to do to help his country heal. He established the Tribunal for Reconciliation, wherein people would speak truth to each other, confess to their sins against each other, and be forgiven.

South Africa's experience is the model for the world. All nations are implicated in crimes against humanity. As conscious citizens of the world's most powerful nation, let us challenge the U.S. to show the most courage, by being the second country in the whole world to seek to recognize and integrate the excesses of its own all-too-human character.

Though the drums of war are once again beating, I hold out one faint hope, again based on the astrology of the moment. This is a rare transit currently operating on George W. Bush's chart.

Neptune, planet of dreams and visions, as well of dissolution and addiction, is now, for the first and only time in his life, in the 7th house, at 8° Aquarius, criss-crossing opposite his 1st house 9-10° Mercury/Pluto conjunction. Bush may look like he is as “resolute” and bull-headed as ever, but buried in that same New York Times article mentioned earlier is an interesting comment: “A senior White House official said Mr. Bush had edited the document heavily “because he thought there were sections where we sounded overbearing or arrogant.”

Is this a crack in his armor? Is Neptune in Aquarius, sign of group cooperation, of relations among equals, beginning to dissolve George W. Bush's seemingly hard-hearted, belligerent, go-it-alone-and-damn-the-consequences attitude?

This small ray of “hope” may just be my own foolish Sagittarian optimism casting desperately about for some indication that Bush will, despite the odds, and the tremendous, seemingly unstoppable momentum toward conflict, prove worthy of the office he holds; that he'll utilize his Mercury/Pluto conjunction to access his own empowerment so that he can stand up to the seemingly impenetrable and intransigent Cheney/Rumsfeld forcefield hell-bet on war with Iraq, on domination of the world's non-renewable energy fount: Mid-East Oil.

And I know this sounds impossibly Pollyannaish, given the current political and cultural climate of fear and revenge and sheep-like obeisance to “the authorities,” but I will say it anyway:

Just as individuals must come to terms with their own individual shadows in order to heal and become whole, so does the U.S. need to confess the evils it has perpetrated — often with the best of intentions — upon the world. These evils are inexplicably and complexly intertwined with the very founding of this great nation. The extraordinary ideal of tri-partite democratic government has been infected with genocide and slavery and their shadowy grey threads have woven a shroud of original guilt over our beloved nation since its founding. Until we can recognize this deeply entrenched origin of our thick and uncomfortable military, and cultural, and economic armoring, which has left us crippled in our connection to others, unable to sense our shared value, or to celebrate

and honor the global community, we will be like that adolescent, serenely and ignorantly riding roughshod over the neighbors — until one day we will awaken to the dead bodies of our children and the still smoldering ashes of our former “abundance” and we will wonder what went wrong.